

THE ANTIQUE AND THE RENAISSANCE

Works of Art in the Canessa Collection

By Royal Cortissoz

THE salient exhibition of the moment is that of Courbet's paintings, which has just been opened at the Metropolitan Museum, an exhibition dedicated absolutely to the modern spirit. That is the spirit prevailing in all the galleries just now. But perhaps for this very reason a welcome doubly warm should be given to the show current at the Canessa gallery. There is nothing modern here. The great room in which Mr. Altman used to hang the masterpieces now assembled at the museum is refilled by the Messrs. Canessa after the fashion of some rich Florentine palazzo. Old furniture, old pedestals and the lofty walls covered with some dark stuff supply the needed stately background. The treasures are of antiquity and the Renaissance, with sculpture playing a leading part. An exhaustive catalogue by Mr. Ernest Govett, Miss Stella Rubinstein and Professor Arduino Colasanti describes a body of nearly four hundred objects. One is in the atmosphere of the classics. It is remote, beautiful and embodies the steady influence to which it is always desirable to return from time to time under the pressure of modern things.

Beginning in the smaller rooms, which serve as a kind of introduction to the main exhibition gallery, the collection begins also with some of the earliest chapters in the history of plastic art. A group of statues in bronze and falcon illustrates the genius of Egypt, enchanting figures recalling the age in which the grand style was often fused with minuteness of scale. An important piece in this section is No. 19, a superb royal bust in rock crystal. The Greek and Roman bronzes are likewise impressive. The Greek statues are works of great beauty, notably the little archaic Athena (No. 22), but we would direct attention even more urgently to the three sculptured disks believed to have formed part of an Etruscan chariot and to the magnificent bronze tripod of the sixth century, a bit of craftsmanship of extraordinary rarity. These things, and the lovely axle head of bronze bearing the head of Medusa, are, indeed, no less rich in pure beauty than the early Marsyas, say, which figures more conspicuously among the Greek bronzes. The antique marbles make a small but distinguished array. Leading them all is the fourth century "Head of a Poetess" (No. 46), which is presented as perhaps an idealized portrait of Sappho or Corinna. The idea of portraiture is confirmed by the singular tenderness of expression in the work. It is a little miracle of Greek naturalism, as subtle in feeling, in true emotional interpretation, as it is lofty in style. Its most notable companion in the Canessa exhibition is a group of the Three Graces, a group akin to that which travellers in Italy will recall from the library at Siena. We note in this section some fine busts and two remarkable Graeco-Roman reliefs, Maenads in marble, figures full of movement and grace.

Around these larger objects there are placed any number of nominally minor

things, Tanagras, vases in terra cotta, silver bowls and so on. Among them are certain strange Scythian ornaments in gold. Those for a sixth century shirt are shown upon a reconstructed garment, a vivid souvenir of the antique past. The smaller works of art embrace some rarities of great charm and value, Byzantine and Romanesque ivories, similar relics of the Gothic period in France, old Limoges enamels—among which we would signalize the amazing reliquary of the thirteenth century (No. 115)—and divers sculptures in wood, ranging from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. There is a marvellous "St. Louis" (No. 120) among those medieval masterpieces. We have alluded to the modern spirit. The head of this polychrome statuette, in its poignant vitality, is a reminder to us, like the Greek marble mentioned above, that it was not left to the moderns to discover the art of living portraiture. The wood carvings lead by a natural process of transition to the sculptures in marble, stone and bronze which bring back the glow of the Renaissance to this exhibition. They disclose nearly all the characteristic traits of a great epoch. One of the chief pieces, for example, is a fourteenth century doorway (No. 132), a perfect type of the plastic gift which turned utilitarian motives into forms of beauty.

There are, of course, numerous Madonnas, exquisite things by Antonio Rossellino, Andrea della Robbia, Sansovino and others. Especially noticeable is the relief by the "Master of the Marble Madonnas," a fifteenth century design peculiarly beguiling through the cheerfulness which exhales from it like a fragrance. The portraits include four striking Lombard profiles, all by

slowly. The peace conference, as the dispatches show from day to day, is occupied with matters rightly regarded no doubt as superior to the question of what may be subtracted from the Berlin Museum in reparation for artistic theft and destruction. In private letters our articles have brought some interesting comments. One of these, written by an official in the Belgian Ministry of Fine Arts, is especially important as showing the noble restraint with which the government of that unhappy country approaches a matter on which it might well make the largest demands. "My poor country," he says, "is like a man who has been very ill and dying for months. The recovery is very slow and difficult. I have advocated since years the scheme of reparation on the artistic ground, 'treasure for treasure.' But I do not think it advisable to ask for Italian masterpieces. The German and Austrian museums are rich enough in precious Flemish old masters, perfectly fitting to fill the gaps of our national collections. To exact more than the works produced on the Belgian soil would look a little like spoliation. I have approached the delegates at the peace conference on the subject." How like Belgian insistence upon the point of honor this! One can sympathize and admire, and, at the same time, it is impossible not to wonder if the Germans deserve such fine consideration. Meanwhile, the Italians have taken steps to recover from Austria a little of what the Dual Empire has owed them. In confirmation of the recent news that has appeared in the press, an official writes us from Paris: "There is certainly a good deal to be said for your views; and you may have observed that the Italians have already acted upon them by taking a very large number of works of art in Vienna and carrying them off to Italy. Whether Austria is to be credited therewith as part payment of what she owes does not seem to be very clear." There is a touch of humor in what the Italians did

MR. CHARLES B. MACDONALD AND HIS CADDIE (From the portrait by Mr. Gari Melchers at the Knoedler Gallery)

miracle is that after the wars of religion, the revolution, the long indifference to the past of the country and all the successive invasions there should yet be left so vast a quantity of exquisite things that still show the varying spirit of France. And now further impoverishment is in sight. All the dealers are draining the country to satisfy the craving for expensive surroundings that the war profiteers of all countries are a prey to. Any old thing has gone up five or ten times beyond what it was only a few years ago. This is a disastrous homage to France. . . . But we have been lifted out of

a great darkness, and France shines so bright in the firmament that no one has the right to be despondent." In his recently published book on "Les Monuments Français Détruits par l'Allemagne" M. Arsène Alexandre gives an appalling collection of more than 200 illustrations from photographs. They expose the architectural losses of the country, episodes of damage and destruction that are so many bleeding wounds. And yet, as our correspondent says, "France shines so bright in the firmament that no one has a right to be despondent." Was there ever a more glorious courage?

Random Impressions In Current Exhibitions

The Museum of French Art will open on Monday, April 21, a loan exhibition of French and other fans. There will also be shown ivories, jewelry, laces and embroideries.

There will be placed on view at the Knoedler gallery to-morrow the large portrait of Mr. Charles Blair Macdonald, by Mr. Carl Melchers, which Mr. H. C. Frick has presented to the Links Club. It is an open air portrait, showing the noted golfer on the course which he helped to found and of which he is president, the National, at Southampton. His caddie is shown standing beside him.

There has just been opened at the American Art Galleries an exhibition of American and foreign paintings belonging to several estates and private owners. They will be sold next Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

An exhibition of kindred purpose and merit is that of fifteen American paintings at the Macbeth gallery. This has one exceptional piece in Mr. T. W. Dewing's latest composition, "Woman in Black," in which his familiar type

of feminine elegance is posed in a massive red-backed chair. The scheme is a new one, possessing a heightened weight and richness. The tone of the black dress is superb, deftly broken here and there with gray accents, and into the reserved harmony the red chair flings a poignant note. The other figure pieces by Mr. F. C. Frieseke, Mr. Richard E. Miller, Mr. Ivan Olinsky and Mr. Charles W. Hawthorne, are in accustomed keys and provide their accustomed strains of light, graceful emotion. The strength of the show lies otherwise in the sparkling boating scene by Mr. W. Granville Smith, the windy marine by Mr. Paul Dougherty, the vivid coast scene by Mr. Childre Hassan and the landscapes by Mr. Chauncey Ryder, Mr. Emil Carlson, Mr. Willard Metcalf and Mr. J. Francis Murphy. Downstairs at this gallery there is a group of about a dozen pictures by Miss Felicie Waldo Howell, whose work we have repeatedly hailed with appreciation in the larger exhibitions, but who has not hitherto to our knowledge had a show of her own. The venture she now makes abundantly justifies itself. It is to the great advantage of the street

Calendar of Exhibitions

American Art Gallery, Madison Square South—From April 17, the library of H. M. Levenson, and Americans, broadsides, books and tracts. From April 19, oil paintings and antique art objects.

Anderson Galleries, Park Avenue at Fifty-ninth Street—Edmund D. Brooks collection of rare books and manuscripts. From April 17, Curtis collection of Staffordshire pottery and art objects. Until April 17, oil paintings, by modern masters.

Art Alliance of America, 10 East Forty-seventh Street—Exhibition of Industrial Art Education, to April 19.

Babcock Galleries, 19 East Forty-ninth Street—Paintings by Sandor Landeau, to April 21.

Daniel Galleries, 2 West Forty-seventh Street—Annual water color exhibition, from April 16 to May 14.

Durand-Ruel Galleries, 12 East Fifty-seventh Street—Paintings by Renoir, to April 19.

Dudensing Galleries, 45 West Forty-fourth Street—Oils and watercolors, through April.

Ehrich Galleries, 707 Fifth Avenue—Paintings by Martin Mower and war lithographs by Spencer Pryse, to April 21.

Folsom Galleries, 560 Fifth Avenue—Group of American paintings, through April.

Ferargil Galleries, 24 East Forty-ninth Street—Group of American paintings, through April.

Gimbel and Wildenstein, 547 Fifth Avenue—Paintings and drawings by Lieutenant Jean-Julien Lemordant, to April 19.

Knoedler Galleries, 556 Fifth Avenue—Pastels by Juliette Thompson, to April 25.

Kraushaar Galleries, 260 Fifth Avenue—Paintings and monotypes by Salvatore Anthony Guarino, to April 25.

Levy, John, Galleries, 14 East Forty-sixth Street—Paintings of sporting dogs by Percival Rosseau.

Montross Galleries, 550 Fifth Avenue—Group of American paintings, through April.

Macbeth Galleries, 450 Fifth Avenue—Fifteen American paintings, to April 19.

Milch Galleries, 108 West Fifty-seventh Street—Selected paintings by American artists, through April.

National Academy of Design, 215 West Fifty-seventh Street—Annual spring exhibition, to April 22.

Paintbox Galleries, 43 Washington Square, South—Paintings by Howard Heath.

Penguin Club, 8 East Fifteenth Street—Paintings and sculpture by Temporary Group, to April 26.

Ralston Galleries, 567 Fifth Avenue—Paintings by Robert H. Nisbet, to April 19.

Scott and Fowles, 590 Fifth Avenue—Landscapes by Ashton Knight, to April 25.

Society of Independent Artists, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, to April 15.

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scenes she paints that she has light and color, a vivid, atmospheric way of painting. But the special virtue of Miss Howell's art is that it reveals a strain of originality, a new point of view, for the exploitation of which she has a broad and easy method. Among the younger artists of the day she is a figure of unusual promise.

The Grollier Club's show of etchings and lithographs by Manet is a modest affair, having an historical interest out of proportion to its scale. This perfect little collection serves to illustrate at full length a memorable aspect of a great talent. From the point of view of pure etching it is not, perhaps, extraordinarily important. Manet never used the needle with the authority of the brush. He never was fully initiated into its genius. Line was not to him a medium of expression cultivated for its own sake and developed to a point of brilliance which would have made him a denizen of the same world, say, with Whistler. That master, indeed, could not merely have taught him, much as to the intrinsic magic of line, but could have opened his eyes where they most needed opening. He did not comprehend the great law of the etcher's being the law of omission. In lithography, too, he showed that he could not draw as he could draw with the brush. But he was Manet, which is to say that he was an artist with a rude power that could be, on occasion, magnificent, and the rich personal quality which distinguishes his paintings is unmistakably felt in his prints. This exhibition is one of intimate, thoroughly characteristic souvenirs. They are not the records of a master at his best. But they are records of a master, fragments in which we take delight not because they are great or beautiful, but because they are his.

(More notes of current exhibitions appear on page nine, this section.)

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MADONNA

(From the relief in marble by Sansovino at the Canessa Gallery)

Brioso, and culminate, in a later period, in examples of Alessandro Vittoria and Bernini. The Bernini make a striking pair, one of them an heroic bust of a Medicean Cardinal, the other a relief of a woman. In the group of terra cotta two masterpieces of realism by Luca della Robbia and Lorenzo Vecchietta command particular attention. There are, to be sure, scores of objects in the exhibition which gloriously assert themselves. Yet it is the magic of the collection as a whole that is above all things potent, the spell of marbles and furniture, of majolica and jewels, of bronze, plaquettes and figurines, which recalls us from modern audacity and caprice to the serenity of immovable standards. We are withdrawn, too, for a moment, from the dominance of the painting. A few pictures are shown, but they are comparatively unimportant beside the triumphs of sculpture and of craftsmanship in the metals. The genius of the classical era is made manifest in some of its most tangible aspects. It wakes an ancient glamour. And, by the same token, it revives the appeal of ideals of beauty having an undying freshness.

The Indemnity

Apropos of the inspiration of the past, we may allude again in this place to a subject which has often been touched upon in The Tribune, the idea of some sort of indemnification from German galleries for the ravages of the war in France and Belgium. The idea makes its way, but, necessarily, very

at Vienna. They scrupulously left behind them in the Austrian capital, as purely Austrian property, the frames of the masterpieces they restored to Italian soil. Just what may be done to pay the French bill remains a problem on the knees of the gods. It is a problem which is at least pretty constantly agitated. Mr. John H. McFadden's plan for a kind of super-museum to be erected at Rheims has been appreciatively reprinted in France. Every proposal for the transfer of works of art from German to French galleries is received with ardor. The tendency, however, as in the remarks of M. Marguillier which we reproduced not long ago, is the same as that visible in the Belgian comment cited above. The French advocates of an artistic indemnity are disposed, on the whole, to confine it to payment in French works of art. How the losses of the country are felt is shown in another letter which we must quote, this one from an official of the French Educational Department. He says: "Among the innumerable causes for anguish which we all had during the terrible months of Germany's last convulsions, one of the things that haunted us most was the feeling that so much of the very essence of France was being swept away. The destruction of beautiful things has been incalculable. Stone and wood and metal carved by hands instinct with the subtlest spirit of France have been destroyed utterly from the frontier to within a few miles of Paris. The

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